

What Teachers Can Do About Inhalant Abuse

ADULTS ONLY

Educate yourself about the problem. Educate yourself and others about inhalant abuse including what types of products can be abused and the signs of abuse.

Don't make available products that can be easily abused. These include correction fluid, glues made with solvents, and dry erase and permanent markers, etc. Instead, look for water-based versions of these products. Please use the contact information below for a more comprehensive list of products that can be misused as inhalants and safer alternatives.

Ensure that students are getting the message about the dangers of inhalant abuse. The main prevention messages are that INHALANTS ARE POISONS, POLLUTANTS, TOXINS, AND FIRE HAZARDS ... THEY ARE DANGEROUS. THESE CHEMICALS SHOULD ONLY BE USED IN THE WAY THEY WERE INTENDED. Take care to avoid describing what products can be abused, how they can be abused, or that children are using them to get "high." Inhalant abuse prevention activities should be included in classes along with health education, environmental protection, and fire safety activities. Another approach is Peer Education Programs, where youth teach other youth health information and healthy behaviors. Inhalant prevention activities should begin in elementary school since use may begin as early as third or fourth grade and peaks in seventh and eighth grade in Maine.

Be conscious of how much of an item is being used by students. If solvent based products are used, they should always be used under close adult supervision. Some examples of these products include: spray paints, solvent based glues, gasoline, paint thinners, and all products packaged in aerosol cans. Many of these abusable products are found in art, shop, cosmetology, science, and culinary arts classrooms. If it seems like more is being used than is necessary, ask questions and monitor the items closely.

When you are suspicious about a child's behavior or appearance, be sure to follow up. Ask them about inhalants and be specific about why you are suspicious. Don't dismiss your professional experience telling you that something is not right. REMEMBER, ONE OF THE ATTRACTIONS OF INHALANTS IS THAT ADULTS ARE NOT SUSPICIOUS OF IT AND DON'T RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF USE. If you have concerns or questions you can follow-up with the school counselor, school nurse, school administrator or contact the Northern New England Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Don't tolerate any experimentation. Remember, even first time use can be fatal. If you discover or see a child using inhalants approach them calmly as startling someone using inhalants could cause them to go into shock. Remove the child from the source and into fresh air. Even if it turns out to be a false alarm, your action sends a clear message about your expectations.

Encourage the Purchase of Safer Alternatives for all teachers within your school and community. Removing unsafe products from schools is an excellent way of reducing youth access to inhalants.

For more information: Contact the Office of Substance Abuse using the information below.

Last Revised December 2004

MAINE INHALANT ABUSE PREVENTION TASK FORCE

A Project of the New England Institute of Addiction Studies / Funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

For more information about inhalants please contact

Maine Office of Substance Abuse Information and Resource Center

Phone: 1-800-499-0027 TTY – 1-800-215-7604

Email: osa.ircosa@maine.gov Web Address: <http://maineosai.org/irc>